

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2006

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 10 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON INFECTIOUS DISEASES OF HORSES

SUBJECT MATTER: EQUINE PIROPLASMOSIS (EP)

DATES: MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, OCTOBER 12-18, 2006

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Equine piroplasmosis (EP) is classified as a foreign animal disease (FAD) to the United States. However, it is assumed that the disease exists at some unknown prevalence in horses indigenous to the United States and in horses that have been imported into the United States. This assumption is based on the fact that prior to February 1, 2004, the "official test" for EP, conducted on equine animals presented for importation into the United States was the complement fixation (CF) test, a test that is known to occasionally yield false negative results. Unscrupulous owners, importers or agents have compounded the problem by purposely treating EP infected horses with immunosuppressive medications to create a false negative response to the CF test. An upgraded C-ELISA test was specified as the "official test" on August 22, 2005, and is highly unlikely to yield false negative results on adult horses.

EP infected horses may exist in the United States at a sufficient disease prevalence to infect resident tick vectors and possibly result in establishment of the disease as endemic in the United States.

There is no conclusive evidence that treatment of a carrier of either of the two strains of EP (*Babesia caballi* and *Babesia equi*) is a viable option.

It is crucial to 1) maintain stringent import restrictions that are sufficient to prevent the importation of seropositive horses into the U.S., 2) develop a cohesive policy at both federal and state levels for identifying and dealing with resident EP seropositive horses, and 3) request funding to research effective treatment protocols for EP.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) to investigate the prevalence of equine piroplasmosis (EP) infection in the United States utilizing accepted survey methodology. USAHA recommends that the first component of this incentive is to conduct a national survey of slaughter horses. It is further recommended that USAHA establish a working group consisting of representatives from equine industry groups, the National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials, researchers and veterinarians knowledgeable about EP to evaluate the survey results, and if indicated, develop recommendations for control of EP positive horses in the United States and/or elimination of EP from the United States.

RESPONSE:

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS)

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) appreciates the work the United States Animal Health Association Infectious Diseases of Horses Committee's equine piroplasmiasis (EP) Subcommittee has done, and acknowledges the need to investigate the prevalence of EP infection in the United States using accepted survey methodology. The current progress on this national survey of slaughter horses is as follows:

- APHIS-VS has established a sample size of approximately 14,000 horses based on the projected low prevalence of EP.
- Horse processing plant management in Illinois has agreed to assist with the survey and has approved the collection protocol.
- The Agricultural Research Services has agreed to direct the laboratory component of this project through collaboration with the National Veterinary Services Laboratories.
- The estimated total cost for the survey is approximately \$45,000.
- The continuing resolution currently prohibits the allocation of funding for this project.